DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 179 258 JC 790 605

AUTHOR Cantor, Harold
TITLE Curriculum and Instruction in the Community College: A Working Paper.
PUB DATE Jul 79
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Curriculum; Community Colleges; *Curriculum Development; Curriculum Enrichment; Developmental Programs; Educational Needs; General Education; Humanistic Education; *Humanities; *Humanities Instruction; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Junior Colleges; Learning Modules; Teacher Role; Tutorial Programs; Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

Humanists at community colleges, faced with vocationalism and other negative forces, have begun to rid themselves of elitist, insular attitudes and are aggressively pursuing new curricular structures and instructional methods within all areas of the college mission. Enrollment in interdisciplinary humanities (I-D) at two-year colleges, for example, rose 7% nationwide from Spring, 1975, to Spring, 1977, despite a 4% decrease in total humanities enrollment. Though I-D courses pose special administrative problems, especially if team taught, and run the danger of having a watered-down course content, they have immediate relevance to the students and provide for cooperation between humanists and social and natural scientists. Within developmental programs, humanists have provided freshman tutorials which combine basic skills with analysis and synthesis and introduce students to significant ideas and works. Other advances include the development of humanities modules in conjunction with career and technical programs and the continued cognizance of the educational market with the resultant development of needed courses such as international studies. Continued progress depends upon individual instructors dedicated to the integration of the humanities within the General Education Movement. (References to specific programs and colleges are made throughout the text.) (JP)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED179258

# CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A WORKING PAPER

by

Harold Cantor
Head, English-Humanities Department
Mohawk Valley Community College

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Harold Cantor

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

JC 790 605

July, 1979

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
A WORKING PAPER

St. Simon's Island, Georgia, July, 1979--A muggy, semi-tropical coastal island may seem the most unlikely place in the world to review recent developments in humanities curricula and instruction at community colleges; yet it has provided me with a sense of perspective and a useful metaphor to describe what has been happening. Having had an intensive experience with curriculum evaluation and development while on sabbatical leave in 77-78 at UCLA where I worked with Dr. Arthur M. Cohen at the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, I returned to my home institution full of plans and provisions for implementing my findings. However, there were so many negative factors impinging on curriculum--vocationalism, the shrinking job market for professionals, budget crunches and baleful demographic projections, public demands for literacy and accountability--that I felt like a real estate salesman just assigned to a disaster area.

Yet, in a bad time for postsecondary education, especially for the humanities at community colleges, as a consultant for the National Endowment for the Humanities during the past year, I have noted a few hopeful signs.

For one thing, humanists have recognized their dilemma and have moved from a defensive posture to an aggressive stance--witness such developments as outreach and targeted recruitment, political lobbying and grantsmanship, the formation of organizations such as the American Association for the Advancement of the Humanities and this nascent group.

For another, the past few years have seen new concepts, new ideas, new curricular structures and instructional methods develop at an astonishing rate. It has been a fertile period for educational innovation.

More importantly--and here I reveal the useful metaphor alluded to above--humanities in community colleges have begun to rid themselves of a certain insularity that characterized some of their courses and their teaching. What has occurred in community colleges is a re-evaluation of the humanist's role vis-a-vis the total college mission. No longer can humanities departments rely on the transfer function alone for survival. According to Dr. Cohen, recent reports from four highly

developed State systems indicate that fewer and fewer community college students are going on to four-year institutions. (Some schools report only 4 out of 100 by body count.) As competition from upper division colleges increases, we are likely to see the A.A. and A.S. transfer function dwindle.

Few good community college teachers are elitists; most are accustomed to teaching career students and welcome their general education function. But there always has been a tendency for some to act out what William Schaeffer, former MLA Executive Director, calls the Herr Professor syndrome and to see themselves as part of an embattled enclave conveying Kultur to the masses.

Five years ago such an attitude would be mere folly. Today it is both anachronistic and fatal. If the humanities are languishing, it is partly because there are still those who have this attitudinal problem. We must root out the sterile concept that we are guardians of an academic temple, and re-affirm our confidence that humanistic learning is of the highest priority because it reaches out to all human beings and tells us what it means to be human.

My intention in this paper is to review significant trends in humanities curriculum and instruction, cite some noteworthy examples of successful programs and, later, work with my group to develop specific recommendations for action. As I list various strategies and tactics in pragmatic terms, I hope that a sound educational pattern will be discerned--that of humanists reaching out to make a positive contribution to the total college mission.

I-D Programs

In its landmark, NEH-supported study of humanities curricula at two-year colleges, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges compared enrollment at 178 two-year colleges nationwide in Spring, 1975, and Spring, 1977. To no one's surprise, while total college enrollment had increased almost 8%, total humanities enrollment had declined almost 4%. A breakdown of enrollment in eleven humanistic disciplines over the same period showed even more dramatic declines--literature down 12%, history 8%, music 9.5%, etc. There was one notable exception, however. Integrated or

Interdisciplinary Humanities was defying the trend and was up 7%. Further investigation revealed possible explanations (see article by the author, Change, October 1978). I-D courses tend to be heavily mediated. They appeal to adult students, "turn-on" unmotivated students and attract enthusiastic, multi-talented teachers. Many I-D programs have been set in motion by NEH grants. At Saddleback College in California, an outstanding I-D program consists of four courses--Time, Space and Deity; Individualism - The Search for Meaning; The City; The Sea. Each is team taught by teachers on a half-load and there is a central coordinator. Courses are run day and evening and are open to transfer, career, and continuing ed. students. In Florida, Valencia Community College has developed its own syllabi and materials for an I-D program that may be chosen in lieu of the conventional G.E. distribution requirements. Miami-Dade is in the process of converting to a series of I-D core requirements which will be mandatory for A.A., A.S. and General Studies students.

Course development rather than full-blown programs permits a college to send up an I-D trial balloon. At my own college, two committees--one consisting of humanists, the other of humanists, social and natural scientists--each came up with a year long new course. The first committee's course, combining elements of literature, art, music and philosophy, was called I-D Studies in Humanities: The Greek World; The Medieval World; The Modern World. It will be taught by a different instructor each quarter. The second committee's course is called Problems in I-D Perspective and will deal sequentially with World Hunger; Energy; and The Population Explosion. Each segment will be team taught and offered as a three-credit elective to transfer, career and non-matriculated students.

Advantages of this Approach

Breaks down barriers - learning no longer occurs in conventional boxes.

Has immediate relevance to students.

Humanists, social and natural scientists work together, share their expertise.

Attracts students from career programs and science who might ignore humanities.

Unconventional "quality" programs can gain national attention for a college, attract grant support.

Disadvantages

Administrative problems - especially if team taught.

Danger of "watering down" course content.

Concern whether I-D courses transfer (in most cases--yes!)

I-D courses may cannibalize students from traditional courses.

In cases of required I-D program, difficulty of getting faculty and administrative support for radical change.

Integration of Humanities in Developmental Programs

John Rouche, in his recent book, Overcoming Learning Problems, reported that 65% of the state universities in the United States today practice and publicly admit to open admissions. It will come as news to nobody that the fastest growing curricula in American colleges and universities are in the area of Developmental Studies. Inner-city community colleges such as El Centro College in Dallas have long had institutional support for elaborate developmental programs; now, suburban and rural colleges are paying more than lip service to developmental work as they strive to lower attrition and improve retention. This writer believes that a strong developmental program is the hub of the curricular wheel from which all other programs will benefit ultimately.

However, there is a danger because of the emphasis given to basic skills in these programs of losing potential humanities enrollees. Four-week modules on "The Uses of the Comma" can bore students to death, and even the most clenched-teeth, "math-as-fun-and-games" approach is no substitute for the stimulation of the valuing process and the affective learning provided by the arts. Humanists who stay aloof from the developmental programs and wait to receive the students when the students are ready will be permanently stood up as they move on to Respiratory Therapy and Mechanical Tech. How can such defection be avoided? One successful solution

was worked out by Columbia State Community College, Tennessee, an open admission school with a large number of marginally prepared students, whose average composite ACT score is 15.9. With the assistance of a Developmental Grant from NEH, the College is integrating a successfully piloted series of required Freshman Humanities Tutorials into the curriculum of all full-time students, both transfer and career. These tutorials are aimed at 1) improving the students' command of basic humanistic skills which are defined not only as reading and writing but also discussion, analysis and synthesis; and 2) introducing students with limited educational experiences to the meaningful study of the humanities by focusing on significant ideas and works from the "great ages of man." Space does not permit a detailed description of how these small tutorial groups channel students into reading labs, writing labs and non-academic counseling and, moreover, see that they stay there. However, the Humanities Tutorials have the pragmatic goal of relating humanistic skills and knowledge to the student's over-all college program and to long-range career plans.

The principle that the planners at Columbia State have discovered is that a little can go a long way; only one hour per week in the year-long composition course is devoted to Humanities Tutorials. But the materials selected and activities are memorable. During Fall Quarter students read "Antigone," visit Nashville to view the replicas of the Parthenon and Elgin Marbles, and can act in or see a staged version of "Antigone." Winter Quarter focuses on the Middle Ages, Chaucer, a visit to a nearby French Gothic Church and a medieval music concert. Spring Quarter concentrates on the Rennaissance, More's Utopia, a film on DaVinci, and a live performance of Shakespeare. Meanwhile, the students are building their basic skills and writing and thinking about their experiences. Do the students like the tutorials? Preliminary evaluation indicates they do. Will some take further courses in the Humanities they might not have taken? That remains to be seen.

The ethnic make-up of clientele in some developmental programs in inner-city schools provides an opportunity for humanists to work cooperatively with remedial teams. Contrary to what one might suppose, Hispanics and Black-Americans are not seeking skill-building and job training alone. These ethnic groups are hungry for courses that address problems of cultural identity and political and historical awareness--the Roots syndrome. Humanists who can adapt Language, Cultural Anthropology, Literature and History courses into developmental programs will be reaching a receptive clientele. At the inner city campus of the Community College of Denver, humanities enrollment climbed from 1975 to '77 precisely because an aggressive faculty combined ethnic studies with remedial work. (I do not mean to minimize the tensions and internal squabbles that competitive ethnic programs produced in many colleges in the Sixties. But we are in another time now and, it sometimes seems, another country.) I would urge humanists to work closely with colleagues to infiltrate humanistic studies into developmental work.

Humanistic Modules for Career and Technical Programs

For some time now, educational leaders have been advocating the infusion of humanistic modules into career courses; for example, "Grieving" for medically related programs or a social science unit on the effects of the automobile on society for automotive technology. The reasoning behind this strategy is simple: technical programs are reluctant to "add on" more than the minimum credits for general education required by the college or state; the technologies claim, perhaps justifiably, that they cannot find room in their crowded curricula for additional humanities courses (another applied course is a different matter!); students, given an elective choice, are opting for vocational courses anyhow. Given this situation, what better solution than to design modules which can be easily implemented within existing career courses and which will achieve some of the goals of humanistic education and avoid the formal and lengthy debate that precludes major curricular change?

There is nothing wrong with the reasoning behind this approach (if you agree with Arthur Miller that "some of us have to settle for half") but the progress in module development has been slow. The explanation is that humanists are not altruists by definition and the work and time commitment involved is formidable. At my college, we have a few dedicated souls who have designed units on Thanatology or Ethics for Retail Business courses and teach cooperatively in career courses on an informal basis. But genuine progress in this area will not be made unless the efforts to build modules are less desultory, more organized and incentives for faculty (financial and/or release time) are provided by the College, the State System and/or a Federal agency.

An interesting proposal, which recognizes these factors, has been made by Gene Winter of the Two-Year College Developmental Center at the State University at Albany. The humanities staff at the University would develop a Summer "Institute" devoted to the improvement of the general education components of technical education. Nominations for eight participating teams will be sought from public and private two-year schools in the Northeast. A major portion of the time within the Summer Institute will be devoted to the actual writing and development of a humanities module by these teams--typically two faculty members and a chairperson. During the fall semester, each participating college team will test the module on its own campus and work out revisions. During the second semester, the project staff will compile and distribute the revised modules to all participating colleges, which will try out two additional modules. Final revisions will be made by project staff and the cooperating colleges, so that in a year's time eight field-tested modules will be available for dissemination to participating schools and possibly other two-and-four year colleges on a request basis.

Obviously, such a plan will require funding by the University, grant support, and some incentives from their institutions for the community college people. But

only with this kind of commitment and collective effort will module-building prove successful.

Development of New Programs with Strong Humanities Components

There is a rule in curriculum-building (Cantor's Law) that you may be damned if you do, but you will be twice damned if you don't. At a time of shrinking enrollment in Liberal Arts, we tend to forget that student needs and objectives are changing all the time, that the humanities are a vital component of programs which are tailored to these changing goals and that we have to be alert to that distasteful term--the educational market. Some years ago, the President of my College saw an opportunity to form a consortium with the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute--a fine art museum in our city, which had its own School of Art. We worked out arrangements for a transfer program in which students would take their general ed. courses at our college and travel crosstown to the Institute for their studio courses. We secured "clearance" from the State to offer an A.S. in Fine Arts, publicized and alerted counselors and recruited one student that first year. Now we have 25 entering Freshmen this Fall and 20 Seniors. This is not smashing progress--but 45 students are taking our core humanities requirements, plus a year-sequence in History of Art that would not otherwise have done so. To see new opportunities and foresee potential job markets is to learn a valuable lesson from the occupationalists.

A man alert to these possibilities is my close associate, Dean Frank Jackson, who this past year authored three new programs which are to be implemented in 1980-81. One is an A.A. in International Studies; we anticipate job opportunities will increase in multi-national corporations and government agencies and that this program will give a welcome boost to our language offerings. A new transfer program in Communication Media is to be offered: increased opportunities in broadcasting and trade journalism are predicted and, while much of this curriculum is skill oriented, humanistic courses such as History of Journalism and Film Appreciation are part and parcel of it. A third

transfer curriculum in General Studies hopes to reach the undecided student, remove some of the more stringent requirements of the A.A., accepts nine credits of developmental work and permits sampling of applied courses in occupational curricula.

I cite these examples not because they are successful programs--no one knows at this point how well they will do--but they are adventuresome. Administrators shake their heads and worry about proliferation of courses and the expense of hiring new personnel but it is remarkable how few new courses had to be created for these new programs--most of them were in our college catalogue already. No new teachers have had to be hired--but a few of our multi-skilled generalists took on new challenges, department chairpersons cooperated in pledging resources and people, and we are working together. There are risks. Undoubtedly the General Studies program will cut into our Liberal Arts enrollment, but in many colleges Liberal Arts has become a dumping ground for students who are floundering--in which case they should be in Developmental Studies--or waiting to get into another program--a good reason why they belong in General Studies. I am beginning to believe that the traditional A.A. transfer program should be an honors, quality program for well-motivated, professionally-oriented students who see an economic or personal advantage in taking their first two years at the community college.

The General Education Movement

I wish to say only a few words on this complex subject that has engendered so much debate and spawned so many review committees and consortia. Quite simply, community colleges have a special stake in General Education since so many of our students never go on to upper division courses. We are--most of us--concerned that our institution offer something more than remedial-occupational skill training to every student who enters the college. What that "something more" should be is the crux of the debate. Humanists should participate in "the search for a common learning" not merely to protect their flank. They should be prepared to give-and-take and, above all, to learn from their colleagues. Having just chaired a General Ed. Review Committee,

I can testify that it is a remarkable, enlightening experience. You sit down with faculty from Math and Science and learn what they think is important. Grudgingly, you recognize that your colleague in Civil Technology has been dealing with the History of Transportation for years and that the Health Science teacher is as concerned as you are with values. Gradually, you begin to think of the student's total college experience and what humanists can contribute in combination with other disciplines. If your group can agree on a set of G.E. aims and objectives, you may be able to swing the faculty around to a new set of distribution requirements or an innovative I-D core. That is a long, hard battle. But, even if you fail, there are likely to be curricular spin-offs as you work with your colleagues across department and divisional lines and as new ideas and concepts emerge. Humanists should participate in the General Education Movement not merely to increase enrollment in their classes--though such participation may do so--but in order to re-enforce their contribution to the total college mission.

The Instructor's Role

I have listed five or six trends in curriculum, which I hope to explore in depth with you at the Planning Workshop but so far I have said little about the individual instructor. Obviously, instructors are the key to the success or failure of new strategies, and many humanities teachers have become discouraged or, what's worse, brainwashed. When I worked at the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, Art Cohen had just completed a national survey of the attitudes of humanities instructors in which they were asked what they thought a major purpose of the community college at which they worked should be. Thirty-seven percent of the faculty teaching art, literature, music, etc. answered occupational education. That is a discouraging response. There were other negative statistics, indicating that too many humanities people were teaching "the discipline" narrowly and that too few were reading educational journals and "keeping up" with instructional methodology.

On the other hand, my own experience when the Center visited twenty colleges for in-depth case studies and on independent visits to community colleges belied the statistics. In isolated pockets where the humanities were flourishing or holding their own, I found that, in most cases, individual instructors were making the difference. I think of a California French teacher who combined his cinema expertise with language, devised a whole new way of teaching vocabulary and syntax through films, and quadrupled his enrollment. Or a Midwest literature instructor who teamed with a biologist for an I-D course; their magnetic personalities and choice of exciting materials drew students from every segment of the college.

Of course, state influence, budget and realities of the job market impinge on curriculum. But individuals do make a difference and our staff development efforts must encourage flexibility and adaptability. Innovation in curriculum call for a new kind of humanities instructor. Given a supportive institutional environment, instructors who are willing to explore new directions and change old habits, I remain optimistic about the future of humanities in community colleges.

Dr. Harold Cantor
Head, English-Humanities Department
Mohawk Valley Community College

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
ERIC® CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES
96 POWELL LIBRARY BUILDING
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90024
EE 36

JAN 11 1980